

In the claims:

Claims 1-15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (currently amended) An ophthalmic composition comprising:

a free-flowing vehicle with increased viscosity, and

a preservative consisting essentially of a benzyllauryldimethylammonium salt,
wherein irritation or damage to eye tissue is avoided even when the composition is applied to eye tissue repeatedly over a lengthy period or resides on eye tissue for a lengthy period.

Claim 17 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle is an aqueous based gel.

Claim 18 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 17, wherein the vehicle comprises at least one viscosity-increasing synthetic or natural polymer in aqueous solution or dispersion.

Claim 19 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a carboxyvinyl polymer or an ethylene/maleic anhydride polymer.

Claim 20 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a carboxypolymethylene polymer.

Claim 21 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a cellulose derivative, a natural gum or a dextran derivative.

Claim 22 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle comprises a single-phase aqueous liquid.

Claim 23 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle comprises a two- phase liquid.

Claim 24 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 23, wherein the vehicle comprises an oil/water emulsion.

Claim 25 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the preservative is present in an amount of 0.001 to 0.5 weight percent based on total weight of the composition.

Claim 26 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 25, wherein the preservative is present in an amount of 0.01 to 0.05 weight percent based on total weight of the composition.

Claim 27 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, further comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of an active ingredient, a tonicity adjusting agent and a pH adjusting agent.

Claim 28 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, further comprising vitamin A.

Claim 29 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, comprising:

0.001 to 1 weight percent of carboxypolyethylene;

0.0005 to 0.05 weight percent of benzyl lauryldimethylammonium chloride;

0.1 to 10 weight percent of sorbitol; and

water, the composition having a physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 30 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 29, comprising:

0.1 to 0.5 weight percent of carboxypolyethylene;

0.001 to 0.01 weight percent of benzyl lauryldimethylammonium chloride;

1 to 5 weight percent of sorbitol; and

water, the composition having a physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 31 (previously presented) The ophthalmic composition of claim 29, comprising an alkali metal hydroxide or acid in an amount effective to provide the composition with the physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 32 (canceled)

Claim 33 (currently amended) A composition for administration to the eye comprising a preservative in an amount effective to preserve the composition, the preservative consisting essentially of benzyl lauryldimethylammonium salt, wherein irritation or damage to eye tissue is avoided even when the composition is applied to eye tissue repeatedly over a lengthy period or resides on eye tissue for a lengthy period.

Claim 34 (previously presented) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an eye drop composition that further comprises an active ingredient.

Claim 35 (previously presented) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an artificial tear composition.

Claim 36 (previously presented) The composition of claim 33, wherein the salt is benzyl lauryldimethylammonium chloride.

Claim 37 (previously presented) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an aqueous based gel which can be administered as drops and further comprising a viscosity-increasing polymer.

Claim 38 (previously presented) A method of preserving an ophthalmic composition, comprising employing benzyllauryldimethylammonium salt in an amount effective to preserve the composition, wherein irritation or damage to eye tissue is avoided even when the composition is applied to eye tissue repeatedly over a lengthy period or resides on eye tissue for a lengthy period.

Claim 39 (previously presented) The method of claim 38, comprising employing benzyllauryldimethylammonium chloride in an amount effective to preserve the composition.